

STARTERS



SURVIVAL IS JUST THE BEGINNING.

“Fans of *The Hunger Games* will love it.”

—Kami Garcia, *New York Times* bestselling coauthor of the *Beautiful Creatures* novels

LISSA PRICE

AUTHOR Q&A



GET TO KNOW LISSA PRICE!

Tell us a little bit about *Starters*.

Starters is about a 16-year-old girl, Callie, who is trying to survive on the streets after a war has eliminated all the Middles—twenty somethings through middle aged adults. A vaccine protected the young and the elderly, Enders.

Out of desperation to get her sickly little brother a home, Callie rents out her body to an Ender who will get to be young temporarily. But something goes wrong and Callie wakes up early in her wealthy renter's mansion and dating a senator's grandson. It's a fairy-tale life, but soon she discovers her renter's real plan is to use Callie's body to murder someone.

What led you to writing young adult fiction?

Of everything I was reading, the novels that excited me the most were YA dystopians and futuristic thrillers like *The Hunger Games*, *Uglies*, and *Incarceron*. It's such an exciting time for YA fiction where anything is possible. The writing is very much alive.

Was there a specific inspiration for the novel?

I've always been intrigued with different levels of reality and I wanted to create a situation where the character falls in love with a person who doesn't know their real identity. My inspiration came partly from Christopher Nolan's work, the director of *Memento* and *Inception*. I then did a lot of brainstorming to come up with the concept of the body bank. Today, everything can be rented, even purses. Why not bodies?

What inspired you to create a world in which solely kids, teens, and the elderly survive?

I love moments where a character perceives one reality, but another character believes something entirely different. As I was crafting a story where I could have various levels of

reality, and I came up with the concept of body renting, I decided to create a world where only the young and the old existed. My mind flashed back to a few years ago when they didn't have enough flu vaccine for everyone. The government started a triage system that gave priority to the elderly and the young because they, along with the infirm, were the most vulnerable. So I thought if that were to happen again, for a different kind of disease, what could be the outcome in a fictional world? It made for a unique landscape in *Starters* of teens amid white-haired seniors, and nothing in between.

***Starters* features a society where youth is coveted at an impossible price. Do you see the novel as a commentary on the emphasis placed upon beauty and youth in our society?**

I do play with these concepts, but I'm not interested in judging anyone. I look at my characters and try to have believable motivations for all of them, even the villains. I want the readers to enjoy the ride, feel the emotions, then come away with their own conclusions. Later they might reconsider how they look at certain elements in our society. I love making them think after they've experienced the fun—the way you go to a café after a good movie and talk about it with your friends. The best question for a reader to have is, what would I do in this situation?

Your novel is set in a society that has suffered at the hands of a tragic event. The dystopian genre has grown widely in popularity recently. What do you think it is about this genre that appeals to teens?

I think it's a normal reaction to the state of our world today. We're seeing big chains disappearing, along with our favorite restaurants and shops. Now even the post office is in trouble. With war, unemployment, and global warming, on some days it feels like we're far too close to living the post-apocalyptic life. We're all drawn to these stories as cautionary tales, to see what we need to avoid. It's especially meaningful to teens, because it's going to be their world that they have to live in for a long time and they know instinctively that they need to make it better. It gives me great hope to see people gravitating toward this genre.



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